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DR. PETERS' "NIPPUR."

"*Nippur*," or *Explorations and Adventures on the Euphrates*. The narrative of the University of Pennsylvania expedition to Babylonia in the years 1888-1890, by JOHN PUNNETT PETERS, Director of the Expedition. 2 vols. (G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York and London. 1897.)

THE youngest of the "culture-nations" in the new world has probably unearthed the oldest form of ancient civilization. In doing so, it has paid a part of the debt it owes to those old times. There is poetry in the thought that far-off America sends some of its enterprise, some of its youthful spirit, and a good deal of its money, to help in the work of dragging into the light of day the secrets which the mounds of Babylonia have zealously guarded for so long a time. The fact that the Americans have done well increases the beauty of the poetry. They have had time to learn from the mistakes of others. They have been willing to receive instruction; and they have now earned their diploma as excavators and decipherers.

Those who have carefully followed the trend of Assyriological work during the past few years have certainly observed the more systematic treatment which is followed in the publication of cuneiform texts. When the first flood of this new light poured in upon students, there was a hurry and a scurry to get out any text that one could lay hands on. It mattered hardly where it came from, or what its connexions and affiliations were. This promiscuous publication has been followed by the treatment of the various texts as parts of an organic whole, and there have been showered upon us by such scholars as Schrader, Peiser, King, Meissner, Knudzon, series of texts bearing upon some one of the various subjects of which they treat. Unfortunately, excavations are still largely carried on in a haphazard manner. The one object of the excavator seems to be to get out every slab, stone, inscription, &c., which is to be found in the mound. I am afraid that much of the excellent work done by de Sarzec at Tell-Loh has been of this nature.

The American expedition has done differently. It has worked methodically; it has, as far as it was possible, kept most careful book of the exact spot where the various remains were found, and accurate account of the measurements as it sank its shafts into the belly of the mounds. We are thus able—for the first time I think—to get at a fairly accurate history of the formation of a

mound, and consequently of the successive civilizations which unconsciously built it up. This is the same process which Dr. Bliss followed at Tell-el-Hessy with such excellent results. It was thus possible for Dr. Peters to write the history of Nippur, as he has done in broad outline in the tenth chapter of the second volume. The study of Babylonian palaeography rests now upon a much more solid basis than it did heretofore.

It was in 1884 that the idea of an American expedition to Babylonia was first mooted. The Woolfe expedition which went out in 1885, under the leadership of Dr. William Hayes Ward, was intended to be merely one of observation. Dr. Peters was active in raising the funds for this preliminary campaign; but the whole credit of suggesting and securing the means for the second and real expedition belongs to him alone. The money was contributed by friends of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; and the University stood sponsor for the success or failure of the whole work. The conduct of the expedition fell to Dr. Peters; and in the party were Professor H. V. Hilprecht and Professor Robert Harper as Assyriologists, and Messrs. J. H. Haynes and Daniel Z. Noorian, the last two having been on the Woolfe expedition as well.

The expedition was fortunate in its choice of a site. Nippur or Nafar "is situated in the alluvial clay region formed by the deposits of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates . . . a little north of the thirty-second parallel of north latitude." . . . The mounds of Napar are among the most extensive of all Irak, rivalling in this respect the famous ruins of Babylon . . . The main mass of hills or mounds is about a mile in circumference, but about these again there is a slightly raised surface strewn with pottery fragments extending to a great distance and shading off imperceptibly into the plain, and small outlying mounds occur at the distance of a couple of miles from the main group." I find that as early as 1848 these mounds were visited by Sir Henry Rawlinson. He was surprised at their great extent. He wished to excavate these at some future time "but I left more careful researches to the time when I could commence excavations," are his words. The Germans, also, had their eye upon the place, and Dr. Ward recommended it, among others, as a very promising site.

The battle on the mounds of Nippur really comprised three separate campaigns. The first two (1889, two months; 1890, four months) were under the personal direction of Dr. Peters; the third (1893 to 1895) under the sole care of Mr. J. H. Haynes. It was natural that the first campaign was largely tentative. The explorers were new at their work; and they had to gain that knowledge which only

experience can give. That they were not discouraged and that they succeeded in keeping up the interest of their friends in Philadelphia is really wonderful. The results of the second and third campaigns have richly repaid them for their trouble. The beautiful volumes of Dr. Peters, the clever decipherments of Professor Hilprecht and the well-stocked Museum of the University, are proof sufficient that, given the men and the money, then the early history of mankind may be recovered to a surprising extent.

Nippur must have been one of the earliest centres of Babylonian culture. We can now follow back its history almost to the year 6000 B.C. Some of the earliest known inscriptions have been found there. A few go as far back as 4000 B.C., though the largest number are probably to be dated at about 2500 B.C. This evidence of so early a civilization—and Prof. Hilprecht thinks that it can be followed back to a still earlier period—is of extreme importance in correcting our view of the history of the whole of Western Asia. There is evidence of intercourse with Palestine and Sinai; perhaps, also, with Arabia. There is also faint evidence of trade with Greece on the one hand and China on the other. These tablets, the Egyptian mention of Israel, the Tell-el-Amarna documents, the Aramaic and Hittite inscriptions of Northern Syria and Asia Minor, the recovery of the various cities of Lachish—all these discoveries will shed a light upon that part of the country which to many of the readers of this REVIEW is of supreme importance. Archaeology will come in to complete the history of Palestine which we now know so imperfectly from literary documents of a rather late period. They who have hitherto pinned their faith upon the data afforded by literary criticism will no doubt welcome this archaeological evidence, even though they be compelled to revise conclusions to which they have held for many years.

Dr. Peters wisely determined not to attempt too much. It was, of course, impossible to uncover the whole mound area; he has devoted particular attention to the temple-mount and to the Ziggurat. We now know how certain Ziggurats were constructed, and how the whole temple area was arranged. It is interesting to read that the large earthen altar which was discovered close to the south-eastern wall of the Ziggurat “occupied in relation to the Ziggurat substantially the same position which the altar in the temple of Yahweh at Jerusalem occupied in relation to the Holy Place of that temple.” In the same manner two conical solid towers which were found in the inner wall may possibly “have the same general significance as the Jachin and Boaz which stood before the temple of Yahweh at Jerusalem.” Similar columns have been found in Phoenicia, Mecca, and Mashonaland. Further archaeological investigation will certainly

enable us to understand better the arrangement and the architecture of the Jerusalem temple.

Additional interest attaches to Nippur from the fact that for many centuries a Jewish town must have existed on the débris of the ancient cities. The discovery of Hebrew incantation bowls all over the north-west and south-west surface proves that this settlement must have been quite important¹. Kufic coins discovered at the same depth prove that the settlement existed there as late as the seventh century of our era. Dr. Peters thinks that the Jewish settlement may go back as far as the beginning of the Christian era. It is, therefore, curious that Jewish tradition has only preserved one single mention of the city—נִיפָר (Yoma 10a; Neubauer, *La Géographie du Talmud*, p. 346), which it identifies with Calneh.

Dr. Peters' two volumes contain a great deal more than a mere bare account of excavations and discoveries. The record of his travels to and from the place of digging is most interesting, in the light it throws upon the men and the customs of the country. It is not altogether pleasant reading; for the fair garden which nourished in olden times so many millions of human beings is almost a wilderness, where one is in constant danger from the animals in human form. What could be made out of the country under a stable and firm government, and with the help of the arts of peace in addition to those of war, this newly-discovered ancient civilization eloquently tells us.

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COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK.

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¹ These incantations will be published by Prof. Morris Jastrow and myself.